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000 USSR: MAGADAN, CAPITAL OF THE KOLYMA GOLD EMPIRE

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Part I. The Rise of Magadan (1927-1946)

316 466 1) Introduction: Until the early 1930's the Kolyma region in the northeastern section of Siberia was practically deserted; the only population consisted of several native tribes who were engaged primarily in reindeer breeding. Approximately 175 independent miners were also in the area for the purpose of extracting gold from the rich fields around the Kolyma River; however, in 1931 the Soviet Government, at that time completely lacking gold reserves, began one of its largest enterprises until that time—the exploitation of Kolyma gold on an increasing scale. Labor was primarily prisoners, both criminal and "counter-revolutionary," who were sent to the Magadan area by the hundreds of thousands yearly in an attempt to build the area into a self-sufficient region with only one mission—ship every available ounce of gold to Moscow.

115 121 The information contained in this report is primarily derived from published reports made by prisoners who have returned from the Kolyma area after having served their prison terms as forced laborers. Although admittedly this report is historical in nature rather than a concise evaluation of the present situation, it was considered appropriate, due to a lack of general information and knowledge of the area, to present

115 a survey of the development and buildup of the Magadan-Kolyma area with
121 the intention of serving as an introduction to subsequent reports on current activities in the Kolyma region.

[131 2) Physical Features of Kolyma: Kolyma is that region in the
63] northeastern part of Siberia, named for the Kolyma River; the boundaries have never been made public, but it is generally considered correct to state that the entire administrative entity is bordered on the north by the Arctic Ocean, on the east by the Sea of Okhotsk, and on the south and west by the impenetrable forests of the taiga. In the early 1930's the territory consisted only of the districts of the gold fields on the upper Kolyma and the highway which was being constructed to connect the gold fields with the coast of the Sea of Okhotsk (Magadan-Srednikan-Seimchan Highway). With the passage of time other areas were added to the territory; some claim that at present the entire region encompasses not only the Kolyma area and that part bordering on the Sea of Okhotsk but also the regions along the Yana and Indigirka Rivers in addition to the whole of the Chukotsk region and Kamchatka.

Another estimate of the geographical boundaries of the territory claims that the entire Soviet Far East is under the jurisdiction of Khabarovsk Krai (a "krai" is a political subdivision), which in turn contains the following component parts: The Jewish Autonomous Oblast, Lower Amur Oblast, and Kamchatka Oblast (This last Oblast is claimed to comprise Chukchi and Koryak national okrugs; in addition, there are supposedly two distinct areas of oblast size within the Krai: One centered at Khabarovsk and the other at Magadan in the Kolyma territory, in which the constituent rayons come under the direct jurisdiction of the Khabarovsk Krai administration.

625 Be that as it may, there is ample evidence to support the contention
631 that neither of the two above cited political divisions are technically correct; due to the establishment of Dalstroy (Far Eastern
471 Construction Administration) in 1931-1932, it may be stated with considerable justification that the jurisdiction of Dalstroy extends over all northeast Siberia at the present time, taking in all the land east of the Lena River and north of the River Aldan. If this is the case, the total area is approximately six times that of metropolitan France or some 1,400,000 square miles.

In other words, it is quite clear that the exact geographical boundaries of the region are not known, but it may be at least assumed that Dalstroy, which is an organ of the MVD, has complete control of at least the Kolyma region and most likely the northern areas of Chukchi and Koryak. That the MVD under the name of Dalstroy is in control of large tracts of territory is a proven fact, but the territorial limitations of this organization are not clear.

642 3) Administration: The Constitution of the USSR is not formally
625 operative throughout this vast area[1] (equal to approximately 40% of the United States proper), and the usual authority of regional Soviet agencies does not apply. There are no local Soviets in the territory, nor do elections occur with the exception of those for the Supreme Soviet. However, even in this instance, it is worthy of note that the Kolyma representative in the Soviet of Nationalities is Lieutenant General Nishikov of the MVD, chief of Dalstroy. The widespread area and activities under the Dalstroy administration have resulted in an organization where the economic life of the region is combined with legislative, judicial, administrative, and police functions. In the general structure of governmental authority in the USSR, Dalstroy occupies a unique position; it is beyond all doubt an organ of the MVD, and its official name is "Dalstroy MVD." In the organization of the MVD, Dalstroy comes under the authority of one of the Deputy Ministers.

[1] [i.e., the Kolyma region of Siberia — Analyst]

however, the NVD appoints the head of Dalstroy, leaving to him the selection of his assistants. Authority is held and exercised solely by Dalstroy, and everybody who represents this authority is appointed by the head of the organization or his assistants acting as his agents. Every inhabited place has a "commandant" who has authority over the territory under his control. Under Dalstroy rules this commandant has the right to inflict the death penalty on all prisoners.

A somewhat different status is accorded to the remnants of the native tribes which form so-called "national districts." They enjoy various privileges and are given assistance by the Soviet Government; however, it should be noted that these privileges and assistance can be considered as such only in comparison with the position of the prisoners. These local tribes number only a few thousand, and even in their national districts they have no real authority to govern themselves.

4) Population: The population of the region[1] is not accurately known, primarily due to the continual turnover of prisoners who are imported by the hundreds of thousands yearly and who die at almost the same rate. Before the discovery of gold and the creation of Dalstroy, the local population could hardly have exceeded 25,000 to 30,000; according to the census of 1926-1927 the population of the Kolyma region was 7,580. It is very unlikely that the number of aborigines has materially increased under the rule of Dalstroy; in fact, during the first period of the Revolution the native population showed a marked tendency to decrease.

However, the total population of the Kolyma region during the Dalstroy administration has grown fantastically, and the only explanation is the importation of prisoner labor. The exact number of prisoners cannot be determined for obvious reasons; however, according to a report by a Soviet seaman who formerly served on ships running between Vladivostok and Magadan the entire Kolyma region is

> "a single concentration camp. Into it have been thrown huge masses of the repressed. How many of them he cannot say exactly.... In his opinion it may be calculated with considerable accuracy that during the years 1937 to 1940 not less than a million and a half persons were brought on steamers from Vladivostok to Magadan; during each navigation season from April to November four Dalstroy steamers (Felix Dzherzhinskiy, Dalstroy, Soviatsia, and Dzhurma) were in operation, each making from 12 to 15 voyages in the course of the summer and bringing from 6,000 to 9,000 persons on each voyage."[1]

(Note: Radio Magadan in a report on 24 October 1955 stated that "Nagayevo port vessels -[Nagayevo is the port servicing Magadan]- have fulfilled their annual cargo delivery plan 105.8%...the seagoing vessels of the Nagayevo maritime port overfulfilled their 8 month cargo delivery plan but failed to fulfill their 9 month plan. The leading place among seagoing vessels is being held by the steamship 'Felix Dzherzhinskiy.' Good results were also achieved by the steamship 'Dzhurma' which is on its way from Nakhodka to the Kresta Bay carrying vegetables, foodstuffs, manufactured goods, fruits, construction and technical materials, and equipment." The interesting feature of this report is the fact that the steamships "Felix Dzherzhinskiy" and "Dzhurma" which were definitely known to be transporting laborers in 1940 are still plying the same route and very likely are carrying the same "freight" because the hulls of these two ships are known to be constructed to carry prisoners, not freight as stated.)

1 Dallin, David J., Forced Labor in Soviet Russia (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1947), pp. 136-137 [i.e., Kolyma - АНАЛИТ]

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466 According to other sources the number of ships in Dalstroy service is higher than the four ships cited above; it has been positively stated that in 1940-1941 five more steamers (Minsk, Kiev, Igarka, Komsomol, and Uritsky) and the icebreaker, "Sakhalin," were in operation with a total shipping capacity of 35,000 passengers. (Note: Local Soviet Far Eastern radio stations which service areas with shipping administrations have been noted to make reference to the Uritsky, and in the course of the past six months a vessel named "Komsomolsk" may be the ship "Komsomol," as included in the ships carrying slave labor. This possible identification is noted because monitoring of local Soviet Far Eastern radio stations has always been plagued with the difficulty of "making out" names of persons, ships, and the like."

It goes without saying that prisoners were also shipped into Kolyma by the northern route--the run from Archangel east through the Arctic Ocean. This route was attempted because during the 1930's Soviet ships carrying slave laborers on the run from Vladivostok to Magadan passed through the Sea of Japan and the Tatar Strait, both of which were constantly filled with Japanese vessels; for obvious reasons, the Russians were not too eager to have the Fascist Japanese circles learn of this Soviet cargo. However, due to the extreme difficulties of navigation along the northern route, successes were few; instances of ships carrying laborers being caught in the ice with no survivors were not few. In summation, even if the northern route is discounted, the importation of 400,000 to 500,000 laborers annually is not impossible.

161 Recent estimates of the total population of the area[1] have ranged between 300,000 and 1,000,000; however, inspite of the fantastic death rate among prisoners, millions have been imported as laborers, and there is reason to believe that there is approximately between one and one and a half million people in the area.

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655 5) Development of the Kolyma Area (1927-1938): Commercial gold mining really began in the Kolyma fields in 1927, and at first the entire production was in the hands of free agents who ventured into the area. "In 1929, according to official Soviet statements, gold was being panned in three fields,.... There were altogether 65 prospectors working in the three fields, and a total of 108 men living in the adjoining settlements."[2] According to Soviet law at that time, all gold was to be delivered to the government trust, Soyuz-Zoloto (Union Gold); however, no branch of this trust was closer to the Kolyma gold fields than that office in Okhotsk, which was still more than 1,000 miles from the fields. Furthermore, private gold buyers were willing to pay a higher price for gold than was the government which was attempting to keep gold prices on a level with the rising prices of commodities. This situation had the result that a large "black market" in gold arose, and much of the gold, according to Soviet officials, went into the hands of the Japanese, whose fishing boats were almost omnipresent in the Sea of Okhotsk. These fishing boats brought merchandise to sell in the gold fields, and this can be substantiated by the fact that much of the goods in the Magadan area at that time bore Japanese labels.

The Soviet Government found itself faced with two possible solutions to the problem: either it could permit free-lance gold prospecting as had been the case in California and Alaska, or it could invest a large amount of money into the area in an attempt to build up its own resources for extracting the gold. The first measure was hardly feasible, especially by a government whose basic principle was opposition to free enterprise, and the second possibility was practically impossible because the Soviet Union at that time had no money to invest. It was in this manner that the Soviet Government decided to invest its only and largest asset at that time—people. However, since few volunteers were

1 [the Kolyma region—Analyst]

2 Ibid., p. 113.

willing to venture into such an inhospitable area, prisoner labor was considered to be the only solution whereby sufficient numbers of personnel would be available in Kolyma to exploit the gold resources there. It was at this time that the collectivization program was in progress in the Soviet Union, and labor was to be found in abundance in the form of those sturdy peasants, especially in the Ukraine and White Russia, who opposed the confiscation of their land into collectivized enterprises. Furthermore, previous attempts at the use of prisoner labor had been satisfactory in the construction of the Baltic-White Sea Canal. Consequently, it was decided to move large numbers of "socially hostile elements," as they were called, into the Magadan area to exploit the gold fields.

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6) Assumption of Control by Dalstroy (Far Eastern Construction Administration) - 1931-1932: In the winter of 1931-1932 a special administrative unit was established under the name of Dalstroy, and this organization was responsible for the development of the extreme northeastern part of Siberia—the primary task was the exploitation of the gold-rich Kolyma region. It should be noted that Dalstroy was under the direct control of the GPU (later reorganized into the NKVD and again into the MVD), which immediately undertook to supply the organization with huge numbers of laborers. It might be mentioned that Dalstroy had "first pick" of all the prisoners throughout the Soviet Union; simultaneously Dalstroy procured adequate numbers of free-labor specialists, namely, engineers of all types who were to organize the actual exploitation of gold.

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a. The Leadership of Berzin (1932-1937): Berzin was the head of Dalstroy during the years 1932-1937, and since he was the very first of the NKVD chiefs of the organization, his administration was filled with a terrible loss of life; this was not permitted to interfere with his mission, however.

After a preliminary examination of the situation, it was decided to establish a port on the Sea of Okhotsk and penetrate gradually inland rather than to use an overland route. The harbor of Nagayev, located close to the Ola River estuary, was selected as the primary base of operations; this harbor is at present the port which services the chief city of Magadan. (Note: This harbor is approximately 10 miles long and 3 miles wide.) In order to show the complete uninhabitability of the surrounding area near Nagayevo, the port area has been described as "surrounded by ridges of rock which overhang the water. The rocks, sometimes rising a thousand feet or more, protect the harbor, but on their open sides the winds blow unchecked. Down below where the steep cliffs meet the water, there is no land for human shelter. Above, one is blown off one's feet by the force of the wind that is cold, damp, penetrating, and unequalled in ferocity anywhere in the world."[3] Beyond the ridges surrounding the harbor there is a swamp of the type familiar to this region, under which perennial ice exists; beyond the swamps come the taiga.

In the summer of 1932 ships were dispatched from Vladivostok loaded with Dalstroy cargo, including machinery, equipment, foodstuffs, and manpower. The steamers were gifts to the NKVD by the Soviet Government, and each ship made from 12 to 15 voyages from Vladivostok that navigation season. These ships were specially constructed to hold large numbers of prisoners, and machine-guns covered every inch of the cells. No precautions were neglected to prevent the escape of prisoners in the areas where Japanese ships might rescue escapees and learn the nature of the Magadan enterprise.

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3 Ibid., p. 117.

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Upon arrival in Nagayevo harbor, tents were provided for the guards, while prisoners remained unsheltered in barbed-wire enclosures. The official task was to build the port and a city, which was to become Magadan. In order to give a clear picture of the actual difficulty of the operation, the following citation is quoted in full:

> "The prisoners bore the hardships and built. With bare hands they constructed piers for ocean steamers, setting up caissons weighing many tons under the steep cliffs where the sea was 12 to 15 feet deep at the water's edge. They cut broad roads through the stone, leading down to the piers. They built, in order of importance, several plants: a sawmill, a brickyard, a fish-salting factory, ship repair yards, a power station. They began draining the swamp and clearing the taiga adjacent to the spot selected for the future town, felling and uprooting trees, pulling up moss by hand, and harrowing the soil over and over to create a semblance of cultivable top soil as a measure of defense against the encroaching geological ice. They built houses for the administrative staff, which included private houses for the officials and their hired servants; for the GPU they built 'cold-resistant' barracks with double walls filled in with sawdust; they built a special small house for the police dogs which were later to play such an important role in the Kolyma penal camps. There was time and labor for everything except for building barracks for the enslaved workers themselves."[4]

At first there were no established work hours; prisoners "were compelled to work as long as they could stand on their feet; they were required to show 'enthusiasm.' The food was meager—bread, dried fish, sometimes hot soup, and twice a day a mug of hot water."[5] In addition, the fact that workers were continually wet from working in swamps or the construction of the port led to epidemics, and the death rate rose at an incredible rate; disease ultimately spread to the NKVD guards and the hired technical personnel. It was this factor which led to the decision to build barracks for the laborers. These barracks were built with only single boards for the walls, and contained only iron stoves for heat in a climate where -60 degrees in winter is common and where -90 degrees has been recorded. The prisoners were informed that these barracks were only temporary, but in 1946 these very same barracks were still in use.

Every week steamers continued to unload masses of prisoners in Nagayev harbor. These prisoners were all "long-timers" who were chosen because of their physical fitness—most were Siberian farmers, Don and Kuban Cossacks, and Ukrainian and White Russian peasants. It goes without saying that these people were selected from opponents of the collectivization program which had been completed just prior. It would have been a complete waste of time to transport any other than the above mentioned healthy people because experience was to show that only the physically strong were able to exist in Kolyma, and even many of these died within two years.

All of the above activity culminated in the erection of the present city of Magadan; however, Magadan was only to be the base of operation for the actual purpose of the administration, and the gold was in the northern areas in the interior. At this stage laborers were sent into the desolate inner regions with the mission of building roads from the gold fields to the port city; this highway was to extend from

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4 Ibid., pp. 119-120.
5 Ibid., p. 121.

Magadan to Srednikan, and then on to Seimchan. The distance by air was some 200 miles and it was planned to open this road by 1934. The project was begun in the autumn of 1932, but winter set in early, and reliable accounts have claimed that 635 466

> "Blinding snowstorms raged for weeks on end. At times, even in Magadan, walking from one house to another was almost impossible. On several occasions communication with the taiga was completely cut off, and no food could be sent to the inland camps. Since the supplies the prisoners could take with them on leaving Magadan were extremely small, famine would set in.... In addition, in the absence of barracks men had to live in tents or, more often, in brushwood huts, with the temperature at -60. In spite of the insufferable cold, the prisoners went on with their work. Even under normal taiga conditions prisoners died by the hundreds and thousands, and nearly everybody had frostbitten hands and feet. What went on in some of the winter camps must have remained a mystery to the authorities, since in some no living beings were left—neither prisoners nor guards, or even dogs. One of the valleys of the region, the Shalvinski, has since been called 'the Valley of Death.' ...a party of prisoners numbering several thousand, together with the entire convoy of guards, lost their way in the blizzard and died to a man. It used to be said in Magadan that of all those who were 'thrown' into the taiga in the first heroic year of Dalstroy, only one out of 50 to 100 came back."[6]

The Magadan-Seimchan highway proved to require more than the planned two years, and the work was not completed until 1937. In return for this accomplishment, Dalstroy and Berzin were expecting to receive generous rewards. However, upon his arrival in Moscow Berzin was caught in the vast purges of that year and was executed, having been charged with "having ties with capitalist countries, of selling gold to foreign countries, of surrounding himself with confessed or secret 'Trotskyites' as well as other oppositionists, and of planning a coup d'etat in the region and seizing all power so that he could secede from the USSR and join the United States or perhaps Japan."[7]

b. Violence under Garanin (1937-1938): The years 1937 and 1938 resulted in the purges of countless "oppositionists," and Magadan had a large turnover in personnel; many of the NKVD personnel were purged, and a new administration was ushered in with the appointment of Garanin to lead Dalstroy. 635 466 625

At this stage the population of Kolyma increased tremendously; about 100,000 prisoners were brought in annually. Most of these new prisoners were "counterrevolutionary elements"—people who had not done physical labor previously, such as scientists, artists, politicians, educators, leaders of industry, trade, among others. In 1938 the purge struck the prisoners in Kolyma when "Garanin undertook to liquidate thousands of intellectuals. Henceforth there was no more fur clothing for the prisoners. The standard equipment became wadded jackets and trousers which soon hung like torn rags.... The felt boots were replaced by shoes made of canvas.... The wretched rations of the prisoners were deficient in fats; the major component was bread."[8] However, the quantity of bread allotted to each prisoner was determined by the amount of work

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6 Ibid., p. 125.
7 Ibid., p. 131.
8 Lipper, Elinor, Eleven Years in Soviet Prison Camps (Chicago, Henry Regnery, 1951), p. 105.

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he did in accordance with the norm; since norms were set very high even for healthy peasants from the farms, intellectuals invariably failed to meet their quotas. Garanin frequently made trips throughout the various camps, seeking those who had not fulfilled their quotas--these were then shot. "This was still not enough. At night he would have thousands of enemies of the people taken out of all the Kolyma camps...and driven off to prison. This prison called Serpantinka is about 375 miles west of Magadan, in the midst of the forest, and it is probably one of the most ghastly institutions in the Soviet Union.... It was estimated that Garanin had the deaths of some 25,000 persons on his conscience.... He was finally recalled (1938)."[9]

c. Blundering of Vyshnyevetsky (1938-1941): After the arrival of Vyshnyevetsky "no change was made in the treatment, clothing, or food of the prisoners. But the summary trials and shootings of prisoners without trial ceased. The mortality among the miners remained at a constant 30%."[10] The cause of the downfall of the new head of Dalstroy was the expedition to Pyostraya Dresva Bay. In the spring of 1940 a ship was sent to that area with several thousand prisoners and some 800 free citizens on board to exploit the precious metals found to exist in that area. Inasmuch as the ship left so late, Vyshnyevetsky was warned of a possible disaster when the ice jams formed. Prisoners were shipped wearing only summer clothing and with thin shoes. At the destination prisoners began work on the construction of camps in which they were to be imprisoned. However, a hurricane destroyed all the efforts at the construction sites, and the following spring the remnants of the expedition returned to Magadan: 200 free men and 150 prisoners. Not one of the men who returned did not suffer from frostbite, and eyewitnesses in the hospital at that time claim that the survivors, to the last man, were either amputees or insane. For this enterprise Vyshnyevetsky was recalled to Moscow where he was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment; his arrest was due to the fact that 600 free men had perished in the futile effort, but no reference was ever made to the thousands of prisoners who also perished.

d. The Regime of Nishikov (1941-present?): The new chief of Dalstroy was Lieutenant General Ivan F. Nishikov, who according to the latest reports still is in command; whether the execution of his superior, Beria, affected his status is not known. According to Elinor Lipper in her book "Eleven Years in Soviet Prison Camps," the authoress, who was imprisoned in various Kolyma prison camps from 1938 to 1946, states that:

> "he is icily, mercilessly cruel. By cruelty he pushed through the fulfillment and overfulfillment of the gold plan; by cruelty he won decorations and large money bonuses. In 1942 at the age of fifty, he divorced his first wife.... He placed her and her grown son, who was a state's attorney in Magadan, aboard a ship headed for Vladivostok, and married a young communist girl of 29 named Gridassova, a primitive, crude, avaricious creature, who is only too well known to myself and to other female prisoners, for she functioned as the harsh commander of the Magadan women's camp. Thanks to her husband's position she has risen in the military hierarchy and has been decorated. She is the head of Maglag, the camp district of Magadan and the surrounding region, and rules the lives of tens of thousand of prisoners.
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> The couple's country house is located on the highway forty-five miles northwest of Magadan. It is furnished and equipped in the greatest comfort and is surrounded

9 Ibid., pp. 106-107.
10 Ibid., p. 108.

by Nishikov's private hunting preserve. Near by, the prisoners of the invalid camp called 'Seventy-second Kilometer' work in a glass factory which is under the special protection of Gridassova and consequently always registers a marvelous production record. During the War burnt-out electric bulbs were repaired there, since new bulbs were almost unobtainable and even tiny bulbs were sold at a hundred and fifty rubles."[11]

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7) The Kolyma Buildup (1932-1946): As has been indicated earlier, Magadan and the entire Kolyma area were almost uninhabited in 1932 when the expedition under Berzin reached Nagayevo port; however, although at a fantastic cost in human lives, remarkable development of the Kolyma area was made. As early as 1946 it was clearly known that Dalstroy's extensive and many-sided activities were coordinated in a system of administrative organizations, each of which deals with a specific section of the region's economy—the centers of all these organizations are located in Magadan. At that time the following were known to exist: administrations of supplies, fish industry, coal, wood manufacturing industry, road building, agriculture, motor transport, and a few others. Essentially these administrations have the same task--they must insure uninterrupted operation and success in the chief industry of the region—gold mining, and with this ultimate goal in mind, they must supply all necessary materials and products. The ideal situation, as desired by Dalstroy and no doubt by Moscow as well, seems to be for Magadan to be completely self-sufficient and to turn over to the state all gold mined. As far as the fishing industry is concerned, it is known that fish is exported from Kolyma to Vladivostok. Attempts have been made to extract oil locally to supply motor transport in the region; however, there has been little success in this project although the presence of oil deposits in the area has been definitely established.

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Road construction was one of the primary tasks upon the initial efforts in Kolyma; just before World War II, another spurt in road building occurred. In 1939 the administration of road building was split into two independent organizations, one for the south and one for the north. By that time, the trunk highway from Magadan to Seimchan was being extended in the direction of the newer gold fields on the upper Indigirka River, and a number of side roads were also constructed to connect the main gold fields on the upper Kolyma River with the highway. Altogether, according to the best estimates, there were approximately 901 kilometers of paved roads in actual use at that time. However, this was inadequate, and in 1939-1940 a new plan of extensive road building was drawn up covering the construction of new roads in the extreme north, at the Kolyma estuary, and in the south, on the upper Kolyma, in the so-called "old" gold mining districts. In addition to new tributary roads, work was started in 1939 on the construction of a second motor highway from Dresva Bay on the Sea of Okhotsk to the gold-mining territory on the upper Kolyma. Even far more reaching were the plans for road construction east of the Kolyma estuary, in the tundra of the Arctic coastal region, down to the Bering Strait, where geological exploration had discovered gold fields of exception richness, perhaps exceeding those of the upper Kolyma. There have been no exact data concerning these plans; understandably, the information coming from the deep interior of the Kolyma region is generally far more scant than that coming from Magadan. However, at the beginning of the Russo-German War in 1941, all these plans for road construction were curtailed for obvious reasons. As has been indicated earlier, practically all construction activities were halted and many short-term prisoners were even sent back to European Russia where they served actively in the defense of the Soviet Union. In connection with the construction of roads just prior to the German

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11 Ibid., pp. 110-111.

491 invasion, it should be mentioned that the history of the Nagayev harbor development, as cited previously, was again repeated.

316 The actual gold mining operations were controlled by a special gold mining trust within the Dalstroy organization.[1] In 1939-1940 this trust was composed of seven administrative agencies, each in control of its own area. These agencies were

1) The Southern Mining Administration, which had jurisdiction over sixteen gold fields, including the principal fields of Srednikan, Borisikin, and others;

2) The Northern Mining Administration, which was in charge of twelve fields;

3) The Western Mining Administration, which controlled twelve fields;

4) The Southwestern Mining Administration, with eight fields under its jurisdiction;

5) The Northwestern Mining Administration, with six fields under its control;

6) The Chai-Urinsk Mining Administration, with eight fields therein; and

7) The Tenkino-Detrinsk Mining Administration, with four fields. However, it should be noted that, although these seven agencies controlled and directed the activities of 66 gold fields, some of them are spread over such large areas that they should be called groups of adjacent gold fields. Furthermore, it should be borne in mind that the fields east of the Kolyma estuary, which in 1940 were only beginning to be exploited, have not been included in the above tabulation. Information in this respect is nil.

466 The total number of prisoners who work these gold areas[1] is not known; however, according to estimates by prisoners who have managed to return after having served their terms and fled to the west, the normal number of prisoners at each field varies between 5,000 and 10,000 workers. The number reaches its highest peak in May or June of each year: the mining season begins in June at which time new groups of prisoners are arriving at Magadan from Vladivostok. However, by the end of the mining season, the total figure has again decreased due to the heavy death toll; this has been corroborated by Polish prisoners who worked in the Kolyma gold areas after the Soviet-German division of Poland. These same Polish army troops mentioned a camp on the Chukotsk Peninsula, where some 3,000 Polish troops were sent in August 1940. However, all 3,000 died while working in the lead mines, not only due to the usual bad conditions but also due to lead poisoning. Therefore, assuming that the number of prisoner-workers per field averages some 5,000 persons, there is reason to believe that there were at least 330,000 prisoners engaged in gold mining activities in Kolyma. Of course, this figure represents only an estimate for the known gold fields; however, it should be remembered that this total will be swelled by the numbers of women prisoners who are engaged in various other activities like agriculture, lumbering, among others. (Note: No reference has ever been noted where women prisoners have been utilized in the gold fields.) Furthermore, since vast new areas have been in the process of exploitation, including the construction of roads, it goes without saying that additional large number of prisoners are utilized for this purpose; also, there are other mining areas, such as those east of the Kolyma, whereat no doubt large numbers of prisoners are also engaged. Consequently, although no exact figures

[1] [i.e., the Kolyma region, Siberia -- Analyst]

are known regarding the total prisoner population, one thing is certain and that is that the entire Magadan enterprise is on a very large scale and that prisoners form the greatest majority of workers. Due to the fact that three known prisoner ships which were operating in 1940, the "Felix Dzherzhinskiy," "Uritsky," and "Dzhurma," are still plying the same Vladivostok-Magadan route, it is a reasonable assumption that the prisoner traffic is continuing. (Note: It is difficult to assume that these ships have changed the nature of their cargo inasmuch as it is definitely known that the holds of these ships were constructed in a special manner to transport large numbers of prisoners; although it is admittedly possible to change the internal structure of these three ships, it is dubious that this has been done, because it is known from reports from Radio Magadan that activities are being expanded throughout the Kolyma economy. Since the death rate has been so high in the past among prisoners, it is difficult to see how further development of the region could be undertaken without importing further number of prisoners every year.) 466

8) The City of Magadan: One of the results of Berzin's administration was the construction of the city of Magadan; by 1941 the population of this city had been estimated at approximately 70,000, composed of NVD officials and hired specialists who volunteered for service under the Dalstroy administration. It was further estimated that at that time there were some 50,000 such specialists scattered throughout the region. Another section of the population in the Magadan area, numbering a few thousands, was represented by exiles, mostly highly qualified experts whose work in Dalstroy had entitled them to some special privileges, although they are still subject to the NVD. Outside of the city of Magadan there were several big camps for prisoners with fluctuating populations. 361

The central streets of the city were lined with two- and three story houses. Electricity was provided by a power station which also supplied electricity to the taiga areas by means of wires strung over the surrounding mountain ridges.

The population of Magadan faced a problem in the procurement of foodstuffs. In an effort to relieve this situation, "Magadan has a large experimental farm equipped with hothouses. The latter already (1941) grew 'Kolyma' apples, pears, peaches, and even oranges, not to mention a variety of berries, while all kinds of vegetables are developed in the hotbeds, including cucumbers, cabbage, eggplant, muskmelon, and watermelon."[12] The chief problem in the attempts at agriculture was the geological ice. Repeated deep plowing of the soil, the use of fertilizer in great quantities, and similar measures have been used in scientific experiments and have achieved good results. Thus, in some places the ice formerly came to within one to two feet from the surface of the ground, but it has been pushed down to six or eight feet, which has made possible the cultivation of cereals. (Note: Agriculture in Magadan and the entire Kolyma region will be treated in a subsequent report.) 433 241

9) Summation: The entire Kolyma region is growing in importance constantly, and due to the produce obtained from this area, in addition to the increasing population, Magadan and the hinterland cannot be ignored or treated lightly. There are two general aspects of the Kolyma region which should be noted: 433

1) In the New York Times of 9 January 1946, it was reported that there is total gold supply in Moscow of between the wide range of two and ten billion dollars. The interesting aspect of this surmise is the fact that in 1925 or even in 1930 the Soviet government was forced to sell the treasures of Russian museums in order to pay for machinery that it had purchased abroad. Soviet gold has made its appearance only 433 436

12 Dallin, op. cit., p. 133.

during the years 1931 and 1934, and it continued to appear in increasing quantities even during the "Great Fatherland War" when the entire nation was absorbed in the defeat of the German armies. The Soviet Union was in great need of gold some twenty-five years ago, but the gold supplies have grown immensely since that time; the richest gold-producing area in the Soviet Union is Kolyma, and due to the known build-up of the area, it is a reasonable assumption that Kolyma is providing the Soviet Government with the majority of its growing gold reserves. It is this fact that makes Magadan and the entire Kolyma area of such importance, not only to the internal economy of the Soviet Union but also to the future of world politics, because it is a well-known fact that the Soviet Union will use any means at its disposal to increase its international prestige. It is not mere speculation that Soviet offers of economic assistance to foreign nations may have the backing of Kolyma gold. 436 433

2) The Kolyma region is intended to become a self-sufficient area, not only in agriculture but also in fishing and numerous other industries including the production of coal, oil, machinery, among others. A similar situation as was found in Sakhalin may also be said to exist in Kolyma--local self-sufficiency while exporting to the interior the products desired by the Communist planners. For Sakhalin it was concluded that the overall plan was for the Oblast to become self-sufficient while exporting to the mainland oil and fish products; for Magadan and Kolyma, it also appears that the overall picture calls for self-sufficiency while exporting gold to Moscow. 483